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SUBJECT: MEDIA REACTION: ZOELLICK IN NICARAGUA, IRAN

"Some Thoughts on Central American-U.S. Relations," by columnist Mario Rosenthal in Sunday, October 09, 2005 "El Diario de Hoy" (ultra conservative, 100,000)

"Statements last week by U.S. Undersecretary of State Robert Zoellick about U.S. relations with Nicaragua led me to reflect on recent changes in U.S. policy relative to intervention in the internal affairs of other countries, particularly in Latin America and most especially in Nicaragua which, along with Haiti, has suffered from long and frequent U.S. military occupation..

"The mantra of the 21st century is defending democracy. Battleships are no longer being sent to collect overdue debts. Presidents and treasurers of debtor countries no longer fear taking on debts they know they cannot pay because they hope - and they are very rarely wrong - that their debts will be forgiven, and they know that the IMF, the World Bank, and the IADB don't have battleships.

"Relations between the U.S. and Nicaragua have been strained since the Sandinistas won power. During the Cold War, Nicaragua was allied with the Soviet Bloc.. It received aid via Cuba and supported the armed struggle of the FMLN in El Salvador. The U.S. tried to defeat Nicaragua by force of arms in the Reagan era, but Congress would not provide the necessary support, evidently pressured by the huge anti-war propaganda of the Vietnam War era.

"The CIA nonetheless surreptitiously supplied support to the Contras based in Honduras. The effort was unsuccessful, but it lost importance with the fall of the Soviet Union. Open hostility ended when Violeta Chamorro won the presidency, but she was manipulated by the Sandinistas who maintained their power as an armed party. Her mistake was not seeking an alliance with the conservatives led by Enrique Bolaos..

"In a press conference, Zoellick denounced the corrupt pact between Daniel Ortega and his one-time political enemy Arnold Alemn. to defeat Bolaos. The fear is this will open the way for Ortega to win the presidency, which would negatively affect U.S.-Nicarguan relations. [Zoellick] also said the visas of supporters of Alemn and the Sandinistas would be cancelled and that he would immediately revoke a \$175 million loan to Nicaragua. There is neither money nor refuge for the corrupt in my country, he said."

"The Hard Line Option Toward Iran," by Barry Rubin in Sunday, October 09, 2005 El Diario de Hoy (ultra-conservative, 110,000). Column supplied by Project Syndicate.

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"The election of the hard-line mayor of Teheran, Mahmoud Ahmadinejad, as the next Iranian president will likely worsen relations with the West and lead to international isolation for Iran..

"It is clear that Ahmadinejad has popular support. That he has presented himself as a populist, spoken of helping the poor, condemned the working of the government, and acted as if he were a candidate of the opposition is irrelevant. In the end, he won official support against the other hard-line candidates. The regime played its cards brilliantly - converting Hashemi Rafsanjani. into a symbol of 'the system' and portraying its own man as the rebel. It used anti-government sentiments to renew its own mandate..

"Admadinejad represents the young revolutionary activists who brought down the Shah. He was directly involved with the taking of U.S. hostages in Iran.. Most worrisome of all he is close to the most extremist groups in Iran.. Still, fear that an even more radical leader has assumed power in Iran are mitigated by two factors: one, Adhmadinejad will likely concentrate on internal issues..., trying to raise the standard of living of the poorest Iraqis; second, the same group that has had control since the revolution still controls ideological and foreign affairs. The President

actually has less power than it appears..

"Nonetheless, Admadinejad's election makes clear the challenge that Iran represents for .stability in the Middle East... It sends a signal to extremist elements in Iran and their terrorist clients - Hezbollah., Hamas and Islamic Jihad., and other small groups working against Saudi Arabia, Iraq and other Arab states - that they have the green light to launch attacks. Seen from the outside, Iran often appears relatively moderate, but covertly it has been the most important sponsor of world terrorism. At times certain Iranian officials may have acted on their own.. Now they'll feel they have more freedom to do so.

"Admadinejad has also openly supported Iran's nuclear arms program.. As the president of a nuclear-armed Iraq, he'd probably use the weapons. as a means of nuclear blackmail.. It is also likely that Ahmadinejad will move more decisively to further destabilize Iraq.. Iran is already sending agents to Iraq and supporting those who would turn it into an Iranian clone.. A more militant posture by Iran will increase friction with Iraq and generate more anti-U.S. violence.

"The electoral results in Iran are dangerous. and will be a challenge not only for the U.S. but for Europe as well."

BARCLAY